



NEWS RELEASE

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Release No. 0234.98

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USDA ANNOUNCES MEASURES TO PROTECT NORTH DAKOTA AGRICULTURE AND GRASSLANDS

GRAND FORKS, N.D., June 8, 1998--Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman announced today a series of initiatives to enhance the quality of life for people in North Dakota: an additional \$200,000 in research to help farmers combat wheat scab and major changes in the management of national grasslands.

"We know that North Dakota is facing tough times and we're doing all we can to help," said Glickman.

Major damage from wheat scab, a fungal disease which shrivels kernels of wheat and other cereal grain crops such as barley, has occurred in parts of all the major wheat-growing regions of the Great Plains and the Midwest.

"We are determined to stop wheat scab," Glickman said. "Working together--farmers, industry, scientists, and government--we can make that goal a reality."

The disease has caused farmers losses estimated at more than \$4 billion dollars in North Dakota and Minnesota from 1993 to 1996. Since 1993, the Red River Valley of the Dakotas and Minnesota has suffered more economically from scab-induced crop failures than from last year's floods.

The \$200,000 will be shared by USDA's Agricultural Research Service laboratories in Fargo and St. Paul, Minn., as well as cooperating state experiment stations. The money is in addition to \$1 million already appropriated by Congress for wheat scab research.

Glickman's plan to change how USDA's Forest Service manages national grasslands is expected to improve public involvement and coordination between tribes, land managers, user groups, conservation organizations, communities, and local and state governments.

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"The actions we begin today will go a long way toward ensuring healthy prairie ecosystems for future generations," said Glickman. "Each of these measures is designed to foster more efficient administration of national grasslands, provide sound scientific management of these important lands, and improve opportunities for public involvement and collaborative stewardship of these national treasures."

The Forest Service will:

- Establish a grasslands supervisor's office to administer the more than 1.1 million acres of national grasslands located in North Dakota and the Grand River National Grassland in South Dakota. The site is to be determined.

- Require preparation of separate land and resource management plans for each of the national grassland units throughout the National Forest System of the Forest Service; and

- Assign responsibility for grasslands coordination to an associate deputy chief in the National Forest System.

The national grasslands encompass over 3.8 million acres of prairie, primarily in the Great Plains states. The national grasslands are used for forage, grazing, fish and wildlife, water, recreation, mineral resources, and other values, in harmony with natural ecological processes.

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